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August 3, 2020

Mr. Greg Johnson
Program Administrator
Interstate Bridge Replacement Program Office
11018 NE 51st Circle
Vancouver, WA 98682

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I am writing to welcome you to your position as Program Administrator of the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program Office. Replacing the bridge must be a cooperative effort between Washington state and Oregon, and while I am pleased with the progress made to date, I urge you to be mindful to engage Southwest Washington residents and avoid the pitfalls that doomed the flawed Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project.

Hopefully we can all agree that the basic design for a new bridge should accomplish three simple goals: provide a shorter, safer commute for the tens of thousands who cross the river each day; allow freight to move faster and more efficiently; and meet seismic resiliency standards. But in order to achieve those goals there must be a transparent, inclusive process that earns widespread support on both sides of the Columbia River. We are counting on you to create and uphold such a process.

The project, like the CRC, will fail if one state dictates to the other, or if transportation officials only pay lip service to stakeholder's concerns while making decisions behind closed doors. Concerns raised by Southwest Washington residents during the CRC project – and more recently on Oregon's current tolling scheme – were not taken into account. Those projects, and the recently halted Rose Quarter project, are important examples that community input must be taken seriously.

Any project to replace the I-5 bridge will require a strong federal partner, and I stand ready to work with you to ensure that our federal gas tax dollars are brought back to help pay for a new bridge that meets Southwest Washington's needs.

Sincerely,

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress